

Message Text

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S E C R E T CAIRO 12231

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GD
TAGS: MOPS EG LY
SUBJ: SADAT ON EGYPTIAN/LIBYAN HOSTILITIES

1. AFTER SADAT HAD FINISHED DISCUSSING SOMALIA (SEPTTEL), HE ALLUDED TO THE CURRENT EGYPTIAN/LIBYAN DUSTUP. QAHHAFI, ACCORDING TO THE PRESIDENT'S VERSION, HAD SUDDENLY INITIATED THE CONFLICT BY RAIDING AN EGYPTIAN POLICE FRONTIER POST. EGYPT HAD RESPONDED YESTERDAY. EGYPTIAN FORCES HAD PUSHED FIVE TO SIX KILOMETERS INTO LIBYA TO THE VILLAGE OF MUSAIID, WHERE THEY HAD "TRAPPED" SOME OF THE LIBYAN ARMED FORCES. SADAT LIKENED THE LIBYANS TO THE ISRAELIS IN THE OCTOBER WAR. THEY HAD SENT IN TANKS WITHOUT ADEQUATE AIR COVER. HE HAD ORDERED THAT THE LIBYAN TANKS BE HIT.

2. EGYPT HAD ACCEPTED THE LIBYAN CHALLENGE AND THE EGYPTIAN AIR FORCE HAD HIT 40 TANKS WITH AIR-TO-GROUND MISSILES. IN A LIBYAN REAR ASSEMBLY AREA, ANOTHER 20 TANKS HAD BEEN HIT. QADHAFI IS CURRENTLY BUSY REINFORCING THE GAMAL ABDEL NASSER AIR BASE AT TOBRUK. SADAT THOUGHT THAT THE SITUATION WILL BE ESCALATED BEFORE HOSTILITIES CEASE. (HE IMPLIED LIBYANS WILL ATTEMPT TO DO SO, BUT DID NOT RULE OUT EGYPTIAN INITIATIVE.) SADAT HAD AUTHORIZED HIS MILITARY TO DEAL WITH THE LIBYAN ATTACK. "WE WILL

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GIVE QADHAFI A LESSON", SADAT ASSERTED.

3. IN CONNECTION WITH EGYPTIAN/LIBYAN DUSTUP, ARAFAT HAD HURRIEDLY COME FROM FROM LIBYA YESTERDAY TO DISCUSS SUBJECT WITH HIM. SADAT HAD SENT HIM BACK WITH A MESSAGE TO QADHAFI ASKING WHAT THE LATTER REALLY WANTS. IS HE TRYING TO PROVE HIS STRENGTH? IF SO,

EGYPT WILL SHOW HIM. OR IS QADHAFI INVOLVED IN AN ANTI-EGYPT CONSPIRACY IN BEHALF OF SOME FOREIGN POWER? WHATEVER IT IS, EGYPT WILL HIT HIM. GOE, SADAT INSISTED, HAS NO DESIRE TAKE ANY LIBYAN TERRITORY AS QADHAFI HAS IN PAST CLAIMED. EVEN IF MILITARY OPERATIONS CONTINUE, TERRITORIAL ACQUISITION IS NOT EGYPT'S AIM. TO DEMONSTRATE HIS GOOD WILL TOWARD LIBYAN PEOPLE, SADAT HAD ORDERED THAT 30 LIBYAN CIVILIANS CAPTURED AT MUSAID HAVE BEEN SENT BACK TO LIBYA. BUT QADHAFI HAD TO BE TAUGHT A LESSON AND EGYPT INTENDS TO DO SO.

4. SADAT EXPRESSED HOPE THIS WOULD REMAIN AN ISSUE BETWEEN EGYPT AND LIBYA WITHOUT OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE. HE ASKED, HOWEVER, THAT WE "WATCH THE SOVIET UNION". HE DOUBTS THAT THE SOVIETS WILL DO ANYTHING, BUT NEVERTHELESS BELIEVES THEY NEED WATCHING.

5. COMMENT: PREDICTABLY, SADAT'S VERSION ASCRIBES RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CURRENT DUSTUP TO QADHAFI. WHILE QUITE CALM ABOUT HOSTILITIES, SADAT REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES HIS BELIEF THAT THE CONFLICT WILL ESCALATE BEFORE IT SUBSIDES. HE WOULD LIKE TO KEEP IT LIMITED, BUT RETAINS SOME UNEASINESS THAT SOVIETS MAY IN SOME WAY INVOLVE THEMSELVES. AT ONE POINT HE SPOKE SOMEWHAT VAGUELY ABOUT UNSPECIFIED
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"FOREIGN MERCENARIES" ENGAGED BY LIBYA TO MAN EQUIPMENT, BUT DID NOT MAKE VERY MUCH OF POINT.
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